



F Seitz

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May 26, 1983

Dr. Joshua Lederberg
President
The Rockefeller University

Dear Josh:

As part of the process of gaining education and perspective, I spent a good part of Wednesday morning with Dr. Sharon Watson from Fort Detrick. I found her remarkably well-informed about a whole variety of issues, not least in respect to the available literature and the major individuals working in the field. She was quite aware that the presentation to the DSB was a fiasco. She had been sent by one of her superiors with a fixed text. Neither of them had previously had experience of any direct kind with the DSB so that the preparatory material with which she was provided by her superior, based on a talk he had been giving to quite different groups, was obviously out of order.

She makes no claim to be a highly expert bench chemist in relation to the materials picked up in connection with Afghanistan and Cambodia, but she does know the people who are experts both in our own country and abroad. In other words, I am inclined to regard her as a very valuable resource of a certain kind and would not personally brush her off as a individual of no consequence.

I have been out of touch with the DSB for so long that I no longer am familiar with the present mode of operation. However, if there is what might be called a panel on the "yellow rain problem" it should be easy to call a meeting of the main participants at the bench level. Some of the best people are in Europe although there are good ones in United States. As matters stand, I will probably spend part of the summer trying to get a better picture of the overall situation through reading and listening to others. It would be a pleasure to discuss this with you at a mutually convenient time. As you know, there are many individuals who are prepared to discredit anything that is said on this issue unless those statements are themselves intended to discredit. I hope one can find a middle course.

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Incidentally, you will find a copy of a letter by Sharon Watson which was sent to the New York Times in response to Nicholas Wade's recent article. It would be surprising if the Times published it.

Best regards,


Frederick Seitz